

Best Beginnings STARS to Quality For Centers

(Criteria are built for the potential of maximum early care and education participants, field test qualifications related to licensure and equivalents may differ than described in the text of the document. To be safe, please verify with the website and application at all times. Additionally in the case of large centers and different organizational structures, it may be appropriate for the person meeting Director qualifications under the State of Montana licensing requirements and serving as an Education Coordinator/Manager, or Assistant Director, etc to meet the criteria mentioned throughout the matrix for the Director.)

Criteria for 1 Star	
Education Qualifications Training	<p>The Director has completed the STARS Readiness Training –available through your local Child Care Resource & Referral Agency (CCR&R)</p> <p>Department of Public Health and Human Services Licensing/Registration Requirements or can show the equivalent is met through Head Start Performance Standards, or Tribal Program Standards with a Memorandum of Understanding with the State of Montana. Should hold a registration/license or the equivalent.</p> <p>Director on The Practitioner Registry. Available at Early Childhood Project-ECP (at any level)</p>
Staff/Caregiver to child ratio and group size	<p>Department of Public Health and Human Services Licensing/Registration Requirements or can show the equivalent is met through Head Start Standards, or Tribal Program Standards with a Memorandum of Understanding with the State of Montana. Should hold a registration/license or the equivalent.</p>
Family/Community Partnerships	<p>Department of Public Health and Human Services Licensing/Registration Requirements or can show the equivalent is met through Head Start Standards, or Tribal Program Standards with a Memorandum of Understanding with the State of Montana. Should hold a registration/license or the equivalent.</p>
Leadership and Program Management	<p>Application into STARS- available at ECSB</p> <p>Verification of STARS Readiness Training</p> <p>Safe Sleep Training if serving infants through AAP</p> <p>Medication Administration Training One for all staff that administer medication as defined by Child Care Licensing</p> <p>Mandatory Reporting Training available through your CCR&R/Child Care Licensor</p> <p>Practitioner Registry active status.</p> <p>Program has an emergency preparedness plan and process documented and go kits are available in case of emergency. (Star Kit will have more information and also your local CCR&R agency)</p>
Environments for Care and Learning	<p>Department of Public Health and Human Services Licensing/Registration Requirements or can show the equivalent is met through Head Start</p>

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Environments • Health, Wellness & Safety • Curriculum Development and Learning Activities • Relationships 	<p>Standards, or Tribal Program Standards with a Memorandum of Understanding with the State of Montana. Should hold a registration/license or the equivalent.</p> <p>Documentation of Daily Health Checks and, if needed, a Special Needs Health Care Plan. (available in the STAR kit)</p> <p>If serving infants, Back to Sleep materials are available and provided to each staff member and the Director and anyone caring for infants/toddlers has attended the state approved Safe Sleep Training.</p> <p>All staff members must have completed the state approved Medication Administration Training Part One who are administering medication.</p> <p>All staff members must have completed a state approved Mandatory Reporting Training.</p> <p>Staff members responsible for reviewing immunizations of children must complete a training module developed by the DPHHS Immunization Program.</p>
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Criteria for 2 STAR	
Education Qualifications Training	<p>50% primary staff/caregivers are on the Practitioner Registry. A primary child care provider must do the following in order to ensure quality:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Every individual child has a primary caregiver assigned to them for a significant portion of the time the child is in attendance; • Assess and provide care and education services for each child based on the child's strengths, interests and needs; • Assess and incorporate elements of each family's culture, goals and aspirations for the child into each child's individual care and education program; and • Work, on a regular basis, with the families and other child care program staff in planning for the child. <p>Director and staff have a written Professional Development Plan linked to the Knowledge Base- updated annually</p> <p>At least the Director has participated in an approved comprehensive entry level training which may include BEST, CDA, BLOCKS, SOS, or another approved pre-service training. If the Director hasn't taken one of these entry level trainings, in cooperation with the Resource and Referral Agency technical assistance staff, an assessment will be done utilizing the Knowledge Base to determine if necessary for program quality.</p>
Staff/Caregiver to child ratio and group size	A staffing plan is in place assuring continuity of care, appropriate adult to child ratios, appropriate group size, and they benefit from having primary caregivers
Family/Community Partnerships	<p>The provider follows an enrollment process that facilitates an exchange of information between the provider and parent, working to assure strong partnerships. Discussion includes a description of the program and policies as well as parents' values and wishes around such topics as eating, sleeping, toileting, and discipline.</p> <p>The provider has a signed Child Care Contract with each family. Topics in the contract include: hours, fees, payment schedule, provider's and child's vacation, sick leave and absences, responsibility for alternate care, termination policy.</p>
Leadership and Program Management	Participate in training on Program Administration Scales (PAS) - use as a program self-improvement plan for providers to set goals in order to incrementally improve professional and business practices after completing Program Administration Scale Training and conducts a self-assessment.

	<p>All staff shall have available a copy of the appropriate Licensing/Registration Regulations and have signed off that they have read them. If Head Start, the program also has Head Start Performance Standards available in each classroom.</p>
<p>Environments for Care and Learning</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Environments • Health, Wellness & Safety • Curriculum Development and Learning Activities • Relationships 	<p>All staff has access to Montana's Early Learning Guidelines 0-5.</p> <p>All staff are certified in CPR/1st Aid</p> <p>At least 1 person is in charge of food service/meal coordination for the feeding of children, other staff can assist in this role.</p> <p>All eligible programs participate in the Montana Child and Adult Care Food Program or have a rationale for not participating</p> <p>The program has a documented and appropriate internal transition plan for moving children within the program if applicable. If a program has designated age/development groups or classrooms, the program should have a plan and process to assist children and families in the change of moving from one room to another and possibly to new caregivers, etc.</p> <p>If administering medication as defined by Child Care Licensing, at least the Director must have completed the state approved Medication Administration Training Part Two. If more than one person is administering medication, all individuals administering medication must attend the Part Two Training.</p> <p>Breast feeding is encouraged and the environment/program policies are designed to support this.</p> <p>Director completes training in the Environmental Rating Scales (ERS). As part of the training, you will conduct a:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Self-assessment of every classroom/age group must be completed by the Director or a staff member who has completed approved Environmental Rating Scales Training. 2. A written improvement plan is developed to address any ERS subscale score below a 3.0. <p>Program has a process/policy in place for ensuring routine assessment of all enrolled children's immunization records at a minimum of 6 month intervals. At each review, the program will complete form PHHS-107 for all children who are not up to date and conditionally attending or with medical exemptions and will send the form to the Local Health Department.</p> <p>Director and all staff complete introduction training on the CSEFEL Pyramid Model and Module 1. The program will also</p>

	work with an external coach on beginning implementation.
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Field Test

Criteria for 3 STAR * Observers will be visiting the facility	
Education Qualifications Training (for employees working more than 1040 hours annually or working more than 20 hours/week)	75% of the caregiving staff (primary, teachers, aides) are on The Practitioner Registry AND at least 50% are at a Level 2 or higher At least the Director is at a Level 3 on The Practitioner Registry Professional Development Plans- same as 2 STAR If caring for infants and/or toddlers, teachers/caregivers are enrolled or have completed the Montana Infant Toddler Caregiver Education classes or its equivalent. If caring for preschoolers, teachers/caregivers are enrolled or have completed the Montana Preschool Caregiver Education classes or its equivalent. (this can be waived if individual is at a level 4 on the practitioner registry, but individual will not be eligible for a Montana Preschool Certificate and will not be eligible for incentives/stipends.)
Staff/Caregiver to child ratio and group size	No change from Star 2
Family/Community Partnerships	The program provides families with information regarding community resources. The program supports families while transitioning their child into child care and out of child care to another educational setting The program provides families with multiple opportunities for involvement, such as: an open house, volunteering, social events, potluck meals, parent/family surveys, parent resource areas, etc.
Leadership and Program Management	Program Administration Scale - The average facility score assessed by a Program Administration Scale observer must be a 3.0.
Environments for Care and Learning <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Environments • Health, Wellness & Safety • Curriculum Development and Learning Activities • Relationships 	Primary Caregivers take part in approved Oral Health Training The program uses an Approved Health & Safety Assessment form to document health & safety policies, sanitation practices, food safety, medication administration, and safe sleep practices. Adults (should be program staff and can include volunteers) participate in family style meal service with the children that is developmentally

	<p>appropriate for the children in your care.</p> <p>Program safety is documented through the use of an Injury/Illness Prevention Checklist (examples in the STAR kit)</p> <p>Program should be able to demonstrate following the most recent immunization record review by the local public health authority, that they have met all of the criteria necessary to achieve the Certificate of Excellence awarded by the Montana Every Child by Two Program.</p> <p>Environmental Rating Scales The average facility score of all sampled classrooms/age groups assessed by an ERS observer using Early Childhood Rating Scale-Revised, Infant Toddler Environmental Rating Scale-Revised must be 3.0 with no subscale scores lower than a 2.</p> <p>Each individual sampled classroom/age group must not have any subscale scores below 2.</p> <p>A written improvement plan is developed by the observer to address any Environmental Rating Scale subscore below a 3.0.</p> <p>CSEFEL Pyramid Model The Director and staff will have completed training on Module 2 and an overview of module 3.</p> <p>At least 50% of classrooms will be working on implementing the CSEFEL model. Programs will identify an approved internal coach that will work on site with staff and will work with external coach as well. Program directors/administrators will provide for available staff time for the internal coach to do their CSEFEL work.</p> <p>Program will use the designated tools as defined by the CSEFEL model such as Benchmarks to Quality and Behavior Incident Reports.</p> <p>TPOT and TPITOS will be used as a tool for the external coach in working with the program on implementation.</p>
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Criteria for 4 Star * an observer will be visiting the facility	
Education Qualifications Training (for employees working more than 1040 hours annually or working more than 20 hours/week)	Director is at least a Level 4 on The Practitioner Registry. Star 3 criteria plus at least 25% of primary staff (see definition above for primary staff) are at least a Level 3 or higher on The Practitioner Registry. Teachers/caregivers have completed the state developed Early Learning Guideline Course.
Staff/Caregiver to child ratio and group size	NAEYC accreditation chart for correlating ratios, group size, ages for centers, pg 83, NAEYC Early Childhood Program Standards and Accreditation Criteria (2005).
Family/Community Partnerships	Transition meetings are held with families whenever children move through or out of the program In addition to ongoing conversations, the provider offers a scheduled meeting/conference with each child's parent(s) at least once per year. Together, they review the child's progress and needs, and set goals for the child. Opportunities are available to facilitate exchange of information between the program and families, such as, home/school journals or notebooks, bulletin boards, newsletters, parent advisory councils, parent volunteers and participation, etc. The program supports family needs by making referrals in the community and by providing resources.
Leadership and Program Management	Program Administration Scale - The average facility score assessed by a Program Administration Scale observer must be a 5.0
Environments for Care and Learning <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Environments • Health, Wellness & Safety • Curriculum Development and Learning Activities • Relationships 	Program has a written curriculum plan aligned with The Montana Early Learning Guidelines 0-5 and Developmentally Appropriate Practices. Direct food service staff attends an approved Food Safety Training in addition to the CACFP required training. Program demonstrates that observations of the children and program are used to inform curriculum and environment to support individual needs of children. Environmental Rating Scale The average facility score of all sampled classrooms/age groups assessed by an ERS observer must be a 5.0 with no subscale scores lower than 2.

	<p>A written improvement plan is developed by the observer to address any ERS subscale score below a 3.5.</p> <p>CSEFEL Pyramid Model All classrooms will be working on implementing the CSEFEL model following the criteria listed at STAR 3 for all classrooms.</p> <p>All staff will participate in training to fully understand Module 3 and will identify a behavior support team with coach support.</p> <p>Program will use the designated tools as defined by the CSEFEL model such as Benchmarks to Quality and Behavior Incident Reports.</p> <p>TPOT and TPITOS will be used as a tool for the external coach in working with the program on implementation.</p>
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Criteria for 5 STAR • An observer will be visiting the facility	
Education Qualifications Training (for employees working more than 1040 hours annually or working more than 20 hours/week)	NAEYC Accredited/ Head Start Performance Standards Director is at least a Level 5 on The Practitioner Registry STAR 4 criteria met for primary staff
Staff/Caregiver to child ratio and group size	NAEYC Accredited/Head Start Performance Standards
Family/Community Partnerships	NAEYC Accredited/Head Start Performance Standards
Leadership and Program Management	NAEYC Accredited/Head Start Performance Standards Program Administration Scale- The average facility score assessed by a Program Administration Scale Observer must be a 5.25 Program personnel are able and committed to contributing to the professionalism of the early childhood field, such as mentoring, technical assistance, program specific sliding fee scales, facilitating approved training at a conference, serving on a professional board, etc.
Environments for Care and Learning <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Environments • Health, Wellness & Safety • Curriculum Development and Learning Activities • Relationships 	NAEYC Accredited/Head Start Performance Standards The program has established policies/program focusing on the health and wellness of children, staff, and families. Environmental Rating Scales The average facility score of all sampled classrooms/age groups assessed by an Environmental Rating Scale observer must be a 5.25 with no subscale scores lower than 2. Each individual sampled classroom/age group must have an ERS score no less than 4.25. A written improvement plan is developed by the observer to address any ERS subscale score below a 4.25. CSEFEL Pyramid Model The Pyramid Model will be implemented program wide and also demonstrate Program Wide Behavior Support.

	<p>Program will use the designated tools as defined by the CSEFEL model such as Benchmarks to Quality and Behavior Incident Reports.</p> <p>TPOT and TPITOS will be used as a tool for the external coach in working with the program on implementation.</p>
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Program Administration Scale for Family Child Care (PAS)-is designed to reliably measure the leadership and management practices of center-based early childhood organizations. It uses a 7 point rating scale (inadequate to excellent) measuring Leadership functions relating to helping an organization clarify and affirm values, articulate a vision, set goals, and chart a course of action to meet those goals over time. It also measures management functions pertaining to the actual orchestration of tasks and the development of systems to carry out the organizational mission.

Center on Social and Emotional Foundations for Early Learning (CSEFEL)- is an approach to addressing social and emotional needs of young children through appropriate prevention and intervention strategies. Programs will be expected to implement the CSEFEL model and participate in the TPOT/TPITOS assessments to continually improve the outcomes and practices.

Environmental Rating Scales-

Early Childhood Environmental Rating Scale-Revised (ECERS-R) is designed for preschool, kindergarten, and child care classrooms serving children 2 ½ through 5 years of age, this widely used program quality assessment instrument can be used by program directors for supervision and program improvement, by teaching staff for self assessment, by agency staff for monitoring, and in teacher training programs. The assessment tool is organized in seven subscales (Space and Furnishings, Personal Care Routines, Language-Reasoning, Activities, Interaction, Program Structure, Parents and Staff). Each of the 43 items is expressed as a 7-point scale with indicators.

Infant Toddler Environmental Rating Scale-Revised (ITERS-R) is designed for use in center based child care programs for infants and toddlers up to 30 months of age. The ITERS-R can be used by program directors for supervision and program improvement, by teaching staff for self assessment, by agency staff for monitoring, and in teacher training programs. ITERS-R is organized in seven subscales (Space and Furnishings, Personal Care Routines, Listening and Talking, Activities, Interaction, Program Structure, Parents and Staff). Each of the 39 items is expressed as a 7-point scale with indicators.

(taken from www.bestbeginnings.mt.gov)

Best Beginnings STARS to Quality Incentives

The two connected charts indicate the resources available to enrolled programs (STARS incentives) or individuals (WORKFORCE incentives).

STARS incentives are available to programs in two forms:

- 1) quality improvement awards
- 2) tiered reimbursement percents above standard state reimbursement rates for those facilities choosing to serve Best Beginnings Scholarship families.

STARS Incentives					
	Family	Group	Small Center 13-29 Licensed Capacity or Average Daily Attendance whichever is less	Medium Center 30-59 Licensed Capacity or Average Daily Attendance whichever is less	Large Center 60+ Licensed Capacity or Average Daily Attendance whichever is less
STAR 1	Beginner STAR Kit, Resources, Help and Support				
STAR 2	\$2500	\$3500	\$5000	\$6500	\$8250
	5% increased reimbursement for Best Beginnings Scholarships				
STAR 3	\$3750	\$5500	\$7500	\$10,000	\$12,500
	10% increased reimbursement for Best Beginnings Scholarships				
STAR 4	\$5000	\$7500	\$10,000	\$13,500	\$16,250
	15% increased reimbursement for Best Beginnings Scholarships				
STAR 5	\$6250	\$9000	\$12,500	\$17,000	\$20,000
	20% increased reimbursement for Best Beginnings Scholarships				

STARS incentives are to be used for continuous quality improvement, staff support and salaries, professional development, equipment, etc. Anything that would assist a program in moving to the next level and maintaining the STAR level achieved. STARS incentives must be used in accord with an approved quality improvement plan.

WORKFORCE incentives are available in a variety of forms and are not tied directly to the Best Beginnings STARS to Quality Program, and have separate eligibility criteria.

All incentives for the Best Beginnings STARS to Quality System, including STARS incentives and workforce incentives, are subject to eligibility requirements as outlined in policy and are dependent on funding.